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Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report summarizes the main conclusions of the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities, held in New York on 23 February 2009 and in Bangkok from 9 to 11 September 2009. The modalities of data-sharing among international organizations, reviewed and approved by the Committee at its fourteenth session, are contained in the annex to the present report.

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I. Introduction

1. The Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities held two sessions in 2009. The thirteenth session of the Committee was held on 23 February 2009 in New York during the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission, while the fourteenth meeting of the Committee, hosted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, was held in Bangkok from 9 to 11 September 2009. Both meetings were co-chaired by the United Nations Statistics Division and Eurostat. The present report summarizes the main conclusions of the thirteenth and fourteenth sessions of the Committee. The modalities of data-sharing among international organizations, reviewed and approved by the Committee at its fourteenth session, are contained in the annex to the present report.

II. Work of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities

A. Reporting mechanism on statistical capacity-building activities

2. At its thirteenth and fourteenth sessions, the Committee discussed the Partner Report on Support to Statistics (PRESS), prepared by the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century. The Committee expressed its support for PRESS as a useful tool for promoting effective collaboration among development partners, as it provides information and key findings on statistical areas, recipients and the amount of financial support provided for statistical development. The Committee noted that in some countries PRESS had been well received and was serving as a basis for donor dialogue. From the regional perspective, PRESS has been seen also as a good starting point for discussions on issues relating to regional coordination.

3. At its thirteenth session, however, the Committee expressed serious concerns about: (a) the low rate of response to the PRESS questionnaire and the fact that some Committee members, including a significant number of United Nations agencies, had not responded; (b) the reliability of the data, since some of the most important donors in the area of statistical capacity-building had not responded and their data could not, therefore, be included in the final results; (c) the methodology used, which could potentially lead to under- or double-counting; and (d) difficulties faced by the United Nations agencies in completing the PRESS questionnaire. The Committee stressed that some technical issues needed to be discussed further and requested the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century to present to the Committee at its next session a summary of the challenges and risks faced by PRESS, as well as a road map for the improvement of PRESS.

4. In response to that request, the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the Twenty-first Century presented to the Committee at its fourteenth session a report proposing further improvements to PRESS with respect to data collection and processing and analysis of PRESS results. One of the questions raised in the subsequent discussion was how PRESS, which reports on current and future statistical activities, could be used by Committee members for planning and coordination purposes. In this context, Committee members strongly emphasized the importance of having online access to PRESS for the early identification of projects,

countries and potential financial and technical partners. The Committee suggested that, at its fifteenth session, the way in which PRESS is used be demonstrated through case studies. However, proposals for the reporting of actual disbursements in addition to commitments by development partners and for the less frequent periodicity of PRESS reports (on a biennial basis) were not supported.

5. The Committee agreed that further work would be necessary for: (a) improving response rates; (b) simplifying the PRESS questionnaire; and (c) preventing double-counting by means of the introduction of more robust methods for the identification of financing and implementation chains. The Committee urged its members, in particular the United Nations agencies, to provide a better response to the 2009 and future PRESS rounds.

B. 2010 conference on data quality for international organizations

6. At its thirteenth session, the Committee discussed the topics and format of future special events to be organized under its auspices. The success of previous events held back-to-back with the European Conferences on Quality in Official Statistics was acknowledged; however, it was also recognized that their format could be improved further. After various options for the topics of future special events were discussed, it was considered that the issue of governance of the global statistical system was of strategic importance. The Committee decided that the issue needed to be discussed as part of its regular sessions, with high-level managers in attendance. A half-day special session on the governance of the global statistical system and the role that the Committee could play was organized in conjunction with the fourteenth session of the Committee, held in September 2009 (see sect. C below).

7. At its fourteenth session, the Committee took note of the report prepared by Eurostat presenting suggestions for the organization and the agenda of the 2010 special event. After an extensive discussion about the necessity, level of participation and topic of the next special event, the Committee agreed on the following:

(a) 2010 conference on data quality for international organizations. A conference, to be held back-to-back with the 2010 European Conference on Quality in Official Statistics, will be organized in the afternoon of 6 May and on 7 May in Helsinki. The conference will be dedicated to international support for the development of national quality assurance frameworks. The target audience is the high-level management staff of international organizations, who will be joined by data management experts. An organizing committee composed of Eurostat, the United Nations Statistics Division, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the African Development Bank was formed. It was further agreed that that committee would prepare a programme proposal;

(b) Special session of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. A special session on human capital will be held in conjunction with the sixteenth meeting of the Committee in September 2010. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Eurostat, the Pan American Health Organization, the World Bank and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme volunteered to be part of the team working on the special session. The

group could build on the very useful thematic proposals contained in the Eurostat report. A proposal to invite experts from the Office of Human Resources Management was noted. A brief note on the progress of the organization of the special session should be submitted to the Committee at its fifteenth session, to be held in February 2010;

(c) Network of statisticians. International statisticians constitute a distinct professional group which does not, as yet, have an established forum. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has suggested that a network of statisticians working in international organizations be established, and has taken the lead in that regard. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the World Bank and Eurostat have volunteered to participate in the initiative. A strategy for the establishment of the network will be prepared for discussion at the fifteenth session of the Committee, to be held in February 2010.

C. Governance of the global statistical system and the role of the Committee

8. In conjunction with its fourteenth session, the Committee held a special session on governance of the global statistical system and the role of the Committee. The purpose of the session was: (a) to increase awareness about global statistical projects and discuss what role the Committee couid play in their implementation; (b) to find a better balance between formal and informal coordination mechanisms; (c) to review and better define the scope of areas of effective cooperation for the Committee, especially with respect to new statistical developments; and (d) to discuss whether a modified governance structure was necessary, in particular for the implementation of statistical standards.

9. The Committee stressed that countries and international organizations were both an integral part of the global statistical system. While the governance of the system lies primarily in the hands of countries, international organizations have an important role to play in the management of its functioning. In particular, they are instrumental in proposing new items for the agenda of the global statistical system and play a key role in supporting the implementation of global projects and standards. In this context, serious concerns were expressed that many countries, in particular countries in Africa, were lagging behind and that, in order to improve the functioning of the global statistical system, international organizations would have to make a special effort to develop statistical capacity in a sustainable manner.

10. In its subsequent discussion, the Committee focused on the particular role that it has to play within the global statistical system. In this context the Committee found it useful to distinguish between "horizontal issues", such as quality, research and development, information technology, tools for dissemination, training and so forth, which are a challenge for all Committee members, and "vertical issues". The latter are oriented towards subject matter, for instance global statistical projects, and frequently concern only a subset of Committee members. There was a broad consensus among members that it would be more beneficial for the Committee to focus primarily on horizontal issues. The Committee agreed that its role and involvement should be at three key levels: coordination, information-sharing and the management of the global statistical system. More specifically, the Committee should: (a) establish as a regular practice discussion and sharing of information on

global statistical projects; (b) provide the global statistical system with new projects and lead their implementation, while maintaining close communications with member States in the United Nations Statistical Commission; (c) coordinate work on various projects in terms of resources, timing, and periodicity and advise the United Nations Statistical Commission on them; (d) ensure the sustainability of the global statistical system through the organization of statistical capacity-building activities; and (e) be innovative, take a proactive approach and liaise with other bodies concerned.

11. The Committee discussed at some length its formal role in the global statistical system but did not come to a conclusion as to whether any specific modifications to the current governance structure were needed. In particular, the proposal to create a bureau for the Committee did not find unanimous support. It was agreed that a group of friends of the Co-Chairs would be established to prepare a road map for the future work of the Committee, which would include the development of a strategy for incorporating major projects into the Committee's work. The World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Labour Organization, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development volunteered to work with the Co-Chairs and to prepare an outline of the road map to be presented at the fifteenth session of the Committee in February 2010.

D. Modalities of data-sharing among international organizations

12. At its fourteenth session, the Committee took note of a progress report prepared by the task team on the modalities of data-sharing among international organizations, which was led by the European Central Bank. The Committee expressed appreciation for the work done by the task team, in particular in striking the right balance between avoiding the use of legal terms and highlighting the key best practices for facilitating data-sharing among international organizations. The Committee supported the suggested principle of "general non-binding best practices" for the modalities of data- and metadata-sharing and commented on its elements, identifying element (a) — "The sharing of available data and metadata among international organizations should be free of charge" — as the most important element. The best practices, as proposed in the document, were adopted, subject to some minor amendments, and are set out in the annex to the present report. The Committee agreed that no further work on that issue was required from the task team at the moment, although, it might be necessary to revisit it in the future.

E. Use of non-official data in imputations/estimations made by international organizations

13. At its fourteenth session, the Committee took note of the report prepared by the World Trade Organization on the use of non-official data in imputations/estimations made by international organizations. The Committee welcomed the report and noted that it provided many interesting ideas. However, it suggested that, while the report should be streamlined, it could benefit from being expanded through the addition of examples of good practices in the use of

non-official data. A small team of members led by the World Trade Organization will summarize the key issues and identify dimensions which are relevant and should be taken into consideration by international organizations when using non-official data in imputations/estimations. The Committee endorsed the following terms of reference for the task team's work:

(a) Identify, in a succinct manner, needs and issues related to imputations/estimations made by international organizations when compiling (i) national data (in an effort to deal with missing data or data deemed inadequate for international use) and (ii) regional and international aggregates, taking into account existing studies and references;

(b) Collect examples of good practices and selection criteria currently used by international organizations;

(c) Assess the desirability, scope, format and timing of possible reporting to the United Nations Statistical Commission.

F. Use of population estimates by international organizations

14. At its fourteenth session, the Committee considered the report of the task team on population estimates, submitted by the United Nations Population Division, and discussed the conclusions and recommendations made by the team in addressing the final objective of its work, namely, to establish internationally agreed standards for annual population statistics. The task team concluded that it was premature to attempt to establish such standards, and recommended improvements in terms of the metadata on the preparation of population estimates made by national statistical offices. The task team further proposed that a structured set of metadata for annual population estimates be systematically compiled and disseminated in international statistical publications.

15. The Committee welcomed the report and congratulated the task team for successfully meeting all of the objectives of its work. In the context of ensuring sustainability, the Committee stressed the need to raise the visibility of the task team's work, and suggested bringing the conclusions to the attention of the members of the United Nations Statistical Commission. The Committee further recommended the adoption of the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) for enhancing the scope and accessibility of metadata for population estimates.

G. Other issues

16. At its thirteenth and fourteenth sessions, the Committee took note of the oral presentations made by Eurostat on the development of a directory containing a brief description of the main statistical services of each organization member of the Committee. Committee members were requested to regularly update their details on the directory website.

17. At the fourteenth session of the Committee, Eurostat submitted a report on progress in the development of the new version of the guidelines for the implementation of the quality assurance frameworks for international and supranational organizations compiling statistics and the revised International Statistical Processes Assessment Checklist, version 2.0. The Committee was also

informed about an ongoing parallel process initiated by the Statistics Division in collaboration with Statistics Canada for the development of a quality assurance framework for national statistical systems, to be presented at the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission in February 2010. The Committee reiterated that the issue of quality management was of tremendous importance for the work of international organizations and agreed with the direction for future work outlined in the Eurostat report.

18. The United Nations Statistics Division presented to the Committee at its fourteenth session its strategy for the celebration of World Statistics Day on 20 October 2010. It planned to organize promotional activities at national, regional and international levels, including the launch of a dedicated website, the organization of a high-level ceremonial meeting and the production of a commemorative book. Committee members were encouraged to take part in the event and to support the organization of activities at the national level. They were requested to contribute publicity materials, such as posters, flyers or brochures, for the World Statistics Day website. The Statistics Division agreed to keep the Committee informed about progress with regard to the organization of the Day.

19. Eurostat updated the Committee at its fourteenth session on the progress made with regard to the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) standards and guidelines, as well as their implementation in various statistical domains, both in sponsor organizations and in other statistical agencies. The need for the organization of special courses or visits to the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange sponsors for the training of staff, as well as for support for the overall implementation of SDMX, was discussed.

20. At its fourteenth session, the Committee was informed about a Web-based inventory of global statistical standards created by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography of Mexico; the Institute had recently donated the English version of the inventory to the global statistical community. A related report would be presented to the Statistical Commission at its forty-first session (see E/CN.3/2010/14). The United Nations Statistics Division intends to enrich and develop the inventory further; however, in order to keep the inventory up to date, the respective specialized international agencies, as represented in the Committee, will have to play an important role. As a first step in this direction, the Institute will give a presentation about the inventory at the fifteenth session of the Committee, in February 2010.

21. At its fourteenth session, the Committee was informed about an existing regional informal coordination mechanism within the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. During the first session of the re-established Committee on Statistics, held in February 2009, a regional version of the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities had been established. It was suggested that the regional committee report to the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities on its deliberations and decisions. The Committee was of the view that this was a good initiative, which could be accommodated in the agenda of one of its forthcoming sessions.

22. The United Nations Statistics Division informed the Committee at its fourteenth session that several member States had expressed their conviction, that there was considerable scope for analytical added value by integrating geographical and statistical information. However, the process of developing global standards in

the area of geographical information was fragmented. Several regional cartographic initiatives had been organized by the Statistics Division, but a mechanism for efficient coordination and management at the global level was still lacking. The Statistical Commission will consider the issue at its forty-first session.

H. Nomination of Co-Chairs for the next biennium

23. At its fourteenth session, the Committee expressed its gratitude for the effective leadership provided by the two Co-Chairs, Mr. Paul Cheung and Mr. Pieter Everaers, and the entire teams behind them. The representative of the World Bank nominated Mr. Everaers to be re-elected as a Co-Chair for a second two-year term. The representative of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific nominated Mr. Henri Laurencin, Chief, Central Statistics and Information Retrieval Branch of the Division on Globalization and Development Strategies of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, to become the second Co-Chair of the Committee. The Committee endorsed the nominations and decided, by acclamation, to elect Mr. Everaers and Mr. Laurencin as the new Co-Chairs of the Committee for the period 2010-2011.

Annex

Modalities of data-sharing among international organizations, adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities at its fourteenth session

1. The Principles Governing International Statistical Activities were adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities at its sixth session in 2005. Principle 1 states: "High quality international statistics, accessible to all, are a fundamental element of global information systems." It is supported by good practices for its implementation, such as compiling and disseminating international statistics based on impartiality; providing equal access to statistics for all users; and ensuring free public accessibility of key statistics.

2. Moreover, at its ninth session, in 2007, the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities adopted the Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) as the technical standard for the exchange of statistical information. This may facilitate the regular and significant exchange of data and metadata among the member organizations of the Committee.

3. Data- and metadata-sharing among international organizations is currently taking place in an environment that may be described as follows:

(a) The statistics departments of international organizations have to comply with the respective administrative rules of their organizations;

(b) Some statistics departments offer their (non-confidential) data and metadata free of charge; other statistics departments sell a significant part of their data and depend on the revenues to finance part of their budgets;

(c) The sharing of data and metadata among international organizations is very heterogeneous: there are small and large volumes, ad hoc and regular exchanges, voluntary exchanges and obligations to report, gentleman's agreements and legal contracts, etc.;

(d) A large majority of the statistics departments perceive the sharing of data and metadata among international organizations to be working relatively well.

4. Given the situation described above, the following general non-binding best practices for the modalities to share (published and non-published) data and metadata among international organizations are being established. The best practices may include the following elements:

(a) The sharing of available data and metadata among international organizations should be free of charge;

(b) The receiving organization may share data and metadata with third parties with the explicit consent of the providing organizations;

(c) The original providing organization must be acknowledged as a source when using or further disseminating data and metadata;

(d) Any transformation of data and metadata by the receiving organization (e.g., the compilation of growth rates or seasonal adjustments) must be well documented and made transparent when using or further disseminating the data and metadata;

(e) Disclaimers related to data and metadata published by the providing organization are to be repeated by the receiving organization when using or further disseminating data and metadata;

(f) The sharing of data and metadata follows the SDMX standard as adopted by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities. The SDMX sponsor organizations are invited to develop within SDMX standard facilities for providing information on sources and disclaimers (see elements (c) and (e) above), e.g., as part of SDMX cross-domain concepts.

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International economic and social classifications

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report was prepared at the request of the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session (see E/2009/24, chap. I.A). The report provides an overview of recent activities in the area of economic and social classifications undertaken in response to the requests of the Commission. In particular, it describes the outcomes of the recent meeting of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications, including work on the reformulation of the mandate of the group and a strategic outline for future work. The Commission is invited to take note of these activities and proposed procedure for adoption of an updated mandate and work programme of the Expert Group.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report provides an overview of activities in the area of economic and social classifications carried out since the thirty-eighth session of the Commission in 2007.

2. The information in the present report is organized in two chapters. Chapter II highlights major activities carried out since 2007 in relation to the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC), the Central Product Classification (CPC), the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) and the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED), as recommended at previous sessions of the Commission or initiated by their respective governing bodies.

3. The Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications has reviewed at its meeting in 2009 the progress of work on these classifications and provided guidance on a larger range of classifications currently under development. The major issues raised at the meeting of the Expert Group, which have an impact on the future work programme and organization of work, are described in chapter III of the present report.

4. Additional information on classifications considered during the meeting of the Expert Group in 2009, reflected in the report of the meeting and in the documents submitted to that meeting, is available on the United Nations Statistics Division Classifications website.[1]

II. Activities carried out by custodians of classifications within the Family of International Classifications

A. Activities carried out by the United Nations Statistics Division

5. The United Nations Statistics Division has continued work on implementation tools for the recently revised International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities (ISIC) and Central Product Classification (CPC), and carried out technical assistance activities in accordance with the guidelines provided by the Commission at its previous sessions.

6. In particular, the Statistics Division has continued work on the Implementation Guide for ISIC Revision 4 (ISIC Rev.4), and the Companion Guide to ISIC and CPC, drafts of which have been submitted to the meeting of the Expert Group in 2009 for review.

7. Correspondence tables between ISIC Rev.4 and the previous version of ISIC, between CPC, Version 2 (CPC Ver.2), and the previous version of CPC, as well as between CPC Ver.2 and ISIC Rev.4 have been prepared. In addition, correspondence tables between CPC Ver.2 and the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System, the fourth version of the Standard International Trade Classification (SITC Rev.4), and the revised version of the Extended Balance of Payments Services Classification, as well as between ISIC Rev.4 and the North American Industry Classification System have been made available.

[1] See http://unstats.un.org/unsd/class/intercop/expertgroup.

8. An alphabetical index for CPC Ver.2 has been developed and is available on the Statistics Division website.

9. The Statistics Division has also carried out a number of classifications workshops aimed at promoting the newly revised standard classifications, informing countries about changes in these classifications and implications for application, as well as providing guidance for the implementation of the classifications. Such workshops have taken place for countries in the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean region (June 2007), Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region (December 2007), Economic Commission for Africa region (November 2008), Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific region (November 2008 and September 2009) and countries in the Caribbean (November 2009).[2] The latter workshop was organized by the Caribbean Community and received substantive support from the United Nations Statistics Division, the International Labour Organization and the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. A workshop for Francophone African countries is planned for January 2010.

10. A survey to monitor the current use of activity and product classifications is planned for early 2010.

11. Translation of ISIC Rev.4 in all official United Nations languages has been completed and the publications are now available in electronic and hard-copy format, facilitating the implementation and use of the classification in many countries around the world.

12. The Statistics Division has also carried out work on a range of other classifications, in particular those related to environmental goods and services, environmental industries, energy products and waste products. This work has been done in coordination with different Sections within the Division and with other working groups.

13. The Statistics Division continues to operate the Classifications Hotline and to issue the Classifications Newsletter as major vehicles for providing assistance to statistical offices and other users of classifications.

B. Activities carried out by the International Labour Organization

14. The final International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO-08) classification structure has been available in English, French and Spanish on the International Labour Organization website since early 2008. A final draft in English of the detailed definitions of all ISCO-08 groups was released on the ILO website in July 2009. Correspondence tables with ISCO-88 are also available. It is anticipated that an updated English index of occupational titles will be released in the near future. This material, together with an updated introduction, will then be released as an International Labour Organization publication following formal editing.

15. French and Spanish versions of the above material will be provided as quickly as possible. Versions of the ISCO-08 structure (but not definitions of groups) have been developed by EUROSTAT in all European Union languages. A number of

[2] Information on these workshops is available at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/class/intercop/training.

countries around the world have either already completed or are undertaking revisions of their national occupation classifications in line with ISCO-08.

16. The International Labour Organization will give high priority to the provision of training on a regional basis and to the provision of technical assistance and advice on the classification of occupations directly to countries or groups of countries. Based on experience gained from these activities, the International Labour Organization also proposes to prepare a manual and training material on how to adapt ISCO-08 for use in national and regional settings.

17. In line with the mandate of the eighteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 2008 the International Labour Organization will also commence work to review the International Classification of Status in Employment (ICSE-93).

C. Activities carried out by the Institute for Statistics of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

18. At the 34th session of the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in October 2007, national authorities expressed their desire for the Institute for Statistics to re-evaluate the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) in light of changes that have taken place in the structure of education systems since the 1997 revision, giving special attention to higher education. In addition, international agencies had identified a number of issues related to the conceptual framework of ISCED and its implementation both at regional and global levels for review.

19. The Institute has established a technical advisory panel to provide guidance on the review strategy, take part in consultations, assist in targeting research and make recommendations for revisions of the current standard. The panel comprises the main international data collection agencies (the Institute for Statistics, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Eurostat), in addition to 12 education experts from the following regions: Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean. They represent a wide range of the international community of data producers and users.

20. At its first meeting, the technical advisory panel reviewed existing classification issues, identified new ones and prioritized them in terms of further action. The following areas were selected for focused developmental work as part of the review of the International Standard Classification of Education: reconsidering the post-secondary/tertiary classification (ISCED levels 4, 5 and 6); redefining criteria and definitions, especially with regard to the orientation (general/vocational) and the destination (labour market or further education) of secondary programmes; improving the coverage of the International Standard Classification of Education with regard to early childhood care and education programmes and technical/vocational education and training programmes; redefining educational attainment and considering the implications for data collection; and introducing specific criteria for the classification of non-formal education.

21. The technical advisory panel meeting also set up a strategy to formulate proposals and reach consensus on the recommendations to be presented to the 2011 General Conference.

22. A revised version of the International Standard Classification of Education is expected to be submitted to the General Conference for its 36th session in 2011. At present, an interim report, submitted to the 35th General Conference, is available at the UNESCO website.[3]

D. Activities carried out by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

23. Over the past two years, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Customs Organization have collaborated on a set of proposals for the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System through the Harmonized System Review Subcommittee and the Harmonized System Committee.

24. The new version of the Harmonized System Nomenclature, HS2012, will include 320 amendments on agricultural and fisheries commodities. It will enter into force on 1 January 2012, as decided by the Council of the World Customs Organization on 26 June 2009.

25. The adoption of these amendments will make the next version of the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System more suitable and useful for agricultural and fishery statistics, improving their quality and precision. It thus enables HS2012 to be an international standard for classifying and coding goods of specific importance to food security and to provide early warning data in the programme of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

26. Since many of these amendments were based on the details introduced in the Central Product Classification, Version 2, following the proposal made by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations during the Central Product Classification revision, the expected modifications in the Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System will also improve its alignment with the Central Product Classification categories for agricultural and food products and establish a solid correspondence and harmonization between these two important international standard classifications, further facilitating comparison of production and trade statistics.

27. Among others, the changes introduced relate to (a) commodities with a high volume of domestic production albeit low cross-border trade; (b) seeds for planting; (c) commodities with a potential future economic importance; (d) commodities needed to monitor potentially endangered or over-fished fishery species; and (e) commodities needed for the analysis of food security.

III. Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications

A. Introduction

28. At is thirtieth session in 1999, the Statistical Commission mandated the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications to be the central

[3] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001837/183706e.pdf.

coordinating body for undertaking classification revisions, preparing practical proposals to bring about the convergence of existing international and multinational classifications, and reviewing the underlying principles.[4] The Expert Group has since met biennially and advanced work on international classifications.

29. The initial work programme of the Expert Group was formulated in the context of the revisions of the International Standard Industrial Classification of All Economic Activities and the Central Product Classification. While these revisions have dominated the work of the Expert Group, other classifications have also been considered during its meeting.

B. Meeting of the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications in 2009

30. The Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications met again from 1 to 4 September 2009 and discussed a wide range of classification issues. The topics covered included classifications that have recently been revised (such as ISIC, CPC and ISCO) and for which the focus has now shifted to implementation, established classifications that are undergoing a revision process (such as ISCED, ICD), as well as classifications in earlier stages of their development (such as classifications of energy products, classifications of waste or time-use classifications).

31. Further details on the conclusions reached and recommendations made for each of the classifications covered at this meeting are listed in the final report of the Expert Group meeting, which is available on the Statistics Division website at http://unstats.un.org/unsd/class/intercop/expertgroup/default.asp.

32. The shift in statistical subjects covered by the Expert Group is the result of different factors. One factor is the reduced need to discuss conceptual details for ISIC and CPC, which has dominated previous meetings of the Expert Group, after the completion of the revisions of these two classifications. Another reason is the emergence of new classifications that need to be elevated to standard classifications.

33. Initial discussions took place during the meeting, which led to recommendations for additional work to be carried out by special subgroups of the Expert Group to address technical aspects of the classifications under review.

34. In addition, the Expert Group addressed the issue of the formalization of criteria for the preparation and assessment of new classifications and revisions of existing classifications in the Family of International Classifications. Furthermore, the Expert Group undertook an in-depth review of the mandate and working arrangements for the Group as central coordinating body for international classifications, taking into account the emerging needs.

C. Family of International Classifications

35. A subgroup has been formed to review the criteria that classifications must fulfil to be considered standard classifications, to be included in the Family of

[4] See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1999, Supplement No. 4* (E/1999/24), para. 108 (b).

International Classifications and to be considered reference classifications within the Family. This work will be based on existing documents that have been prepared in 1999 and will review existing criteria to ensure that new requirements on classifications are being reflected. A more strictly formalized set of criteria will also facilitate any preparatory work on new classifications by providing a clear set of minimum requirements that a classification must fulfil.

D. Mandate and working arrangements for the Expert Group on International Economic and Social Classifications

36. A review took place of the scope of the work and responsibilities of the Expert Group and its working mechanisms. An updated mandate for the Expert Group is being prepared that would more clearly spell out the boundaries of responsibility and authority of the group, which is vital in the work on a broadening set of classification topics.

37. Especially during the discussions of new classifications (or classifications still under development), it became clear that a more strategic and more formalized approach in determining the scope of the work of the Expert Group, its responsibilities and criteria for decision-making are necessary. Similar questions have also arisen during the discussion of classifications that are approved by a process that is not formally initiated by the Statistical Commission, such as classifications maintained by specialized agencies in the United Nations system with their own governing bodies.

38. The revised mandate will also consider the governing structure of the Expert Group to ensure that work can be carried out reliably between the biennial meetings. This covers a clearer definition of membership for the Expert Group and possibly the set-up of a Bureau to oversee the work between meetings, including a definition of the responsibilities and authorities of such a Bureau.

E. Conclusion

39. At the time of writing of the present report, a final proposal for the mandate and work programme of the Expert Group is not yet available. It is recommended that consideration of the topic be postponed until the next session of the Commission in 2011. It is therefore proposed that the reformulated mandate and work programme be submitted to the Commission at its next session for consideration and approval.

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Statistical Commission
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Item 4 (p) of the provisional agenda*
Items for information: Follow-up to Economic and Social Council policy decisions

Policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with a request of the Statistical Commission at its fortieth session (see E/2009/24), the present note is submitted to brief the Commission on policy decisions of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly adopted in 2009 that are relevant to the work of the Statistical Commission. The note, furthermore, indicates the actions taken and proposed to be taken by the Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division, in an effort to respond to the requests made by the Council. The Commission is invited to take note of the report.

* E/CN.3/2010/1.

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I. Follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

1. In its resolution 2009/29 on the role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits, in light of relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 61/16, the Economic and Social Council reaffirmed the need to continue to strengthen the Council as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and thus promote the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and relevant Assembly resolutions, in particular resolutions 50/227, 57/270 B and 61/16.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

2. Ever since the Economic and Social Council invited the Statistical Commission to serve as the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits (see Council resolutions 1999/55 and 2000/27), the Commission has been discussing the technical aspects of development indicators on a continual basis.

3. At its forty-first session, the Commission will consider the report of the Secretary-General on indicators for monitoring the Millennium Development Goals (E/CN.3/2009/16).

4. The Statistical Commission, like the rest of the functional commissions, had reported to the Council the completion of the review of its methods of work in 2005 (see E/2005/24). In particular, the Commission had addressed the issue of more efficient time management. It had also put in place a mechanism to ensure the continuity of its Bureau and cooperation with the Council, including through a standing agenda item on Council decisions. The Commission also enhanced its official programme through panel discussions and other side events during its thirty-eighth, thirty-ninth and fortieth sessions with multi-stakeholder participation. The Commission has found the procedures satisfactory and it intends to continue to implement and refine them at its forty-first session. In particular, the Bureau has a continued mandate to streamline the agenda (see E/2007/24).

II. Multi-year programme of work for annual ministerial reviews of the Economic and Social Council

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

5. As mandated by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 2006/44, a meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairpersons of the functional

commissions is to be held annually in the early part of the year. The Council adopted its first multi-year work programme for the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews in October 2007. The 2009 review focused on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health". In its decision 2008/258, the Council also decided to adopt the following themes for its annual ministerial-level substantive reviews for 2010 and 2011: (a) 2010: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women"; and (b) 2011: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education". The substantive contributions of the Council's functional commissions and expert bodies are considered essential for the success of the reviews.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

6. The Chairman of the Statistical Commission participated in the meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the chairpersons of the functional commissions in January 2009, via videoconferencing, and provided input to the Council's 2009 annual ministerial review on the theme "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health". A representative of the Bureau of the Statistical Commission will also participate in the meeting of the Bureau of the Council with the functional commissions in late January 2010, to brief the Council on the Statistical Commission's contribution to the 2010 annual ministerial review on the theme of "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women". The Bureau representative will brief the Bureau of the Council on the Commission's methodological work in the area of gender statistics, in particular the recent efforts by Friends of the Chair to develop indicators on violence against women.

7. The Commission continuously works on all statistical subject matters to improve the availability and quality of baseline statistics. Furthermore, the Commission is the intergovernmental focal point for the review of indicators used by the United Nations system and accordingly guides the work of the Inter-agency and Expert Group on Millennium Development Goals Indicators, which could feed into the preparation of the annual ministerial-level substantive reviews.

III. Follow-up to Council resolutions on strengthening national capacity in statistics and on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

8. At the initiative of the Statistical Commission, the Council adopted two resolutions in 2005 and 2006, one on strengthening national capacity in statistics (2006/6) and the other on the 2010 World Population and Housing Census Programme (2005/13), in which it requested an intensification of efforts to support national statistical programmes in strengthening their capacity, in the context of the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and beyond.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

9. At its forty-first session, the Commission will consider specific follow-up actions to Economic and Social Council resolutions 2005/13 and 2006/6 under its agenda item 4 (a) on "Population and housing censuses" and 4 (m) on "Statistical capacity-building". The documentation presented under these items describes in detail activities undertaken by the Statistics Division and by its partner agencies to improve the availability and quality of data in supporting the 2010 World Population and Housing Census round and activities undertaken to improve the coordination of technical cooperation activities.

IV. Improving the collection, reporting and analysis of data to enhance knowledge on trends in specific areas of crime

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

10. In its resolution 2009/25, the Council noted the importance of relevant United Nations indicators and instruments for the collection and analysis of accurate, reliable and comparable data on all relevant aspects of specific crime issues, and recognized the urgent need to improve the quality, scope and completeness of data concerning international crime trends and specific crime issues for the purpose of developing evidence-based policies for crime prevention and the operation of criminal justice systems. The Council also underscored the importance of improving data-collection tools in order to ensure a simple and more efficient process, thus encouraging and motivating a greater number of Member States to submit the required information on time and ensuring a more representative assessment, at the international level, of all relevant aspects of specific crime issues, and recognized the importance of the work of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in the regular collection of information through the United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operations of Criminal Justice Systems pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3021 (XXVII) on crime prevention and control and Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/48 on crime prevention and criminal justice in the context of development. In addition, the Council requested, among other things, that the Secretary-General, in coordination with the Statistical Commission, report to the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, at its twentieth session, on the implementation of that resolution.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

11. At its forty-first session, the Commission will consider a note by the Secretary-General on the report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime on statistics on drugs and drug use and crime statistics (E/CN.3/2010/19).

V. Mainstreaming gender perspectives

A. Action requested by the Economic and Social Council

12. In its resolution 2008/34, the Council reaffirmed its agreed conclusions 1997/2 on mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (see A/52/3/Rev.1), recalled its resolutions 2001/41, 2002/23, 2003/49, 2004/4, 2005/31, 2006/36 and 2007/33 and also reaffirmed the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to actively promote the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and social spheres and to further undertake to strengthen the capabilities of the United Nations system in the area of gender.

13. In 2007, the General Assembly adopted resolution 62/133 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, in which it requested the Secretary-General to intensify his efforts to develop and propose a set of possible indicators on violence against women, building on the work undertaken by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in order to assist States in assessing the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women, with a view to allowing its consideration by the Commission on the Status of Women at its fifty-second session and by the Statistical Commission at the earliest opportunity.

B. Actions taken and proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

14. In March 2007, the Statistical Commission held a joint panel discussion with the Commission on the Status of Women on the latter's priority theme for 2007, "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child". The panel discussion, which was part of the interaction between individual functional commissions, was very well received (see A/62/89-E/2007/76).

15. At its fortieth session, the Commission considered a note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Friends of the Chair on the indicators on violence against women (E/CN.3/2009/13) and adopted the proposed set of indicators as an interim set and a first step. It also requested that the Friends of the Chair, under the continued leadership of Mexico, proceed with its work (E/2009/24, decision 40/110).

VI. Policies and programmes involving youth

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

16. In its resolution 64/130, the General Assembly, recalling the World Programme of Action for Youth, which it adopted in its resolutions 50/81 and 62/126, and that in its resolution 62/126, it had requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-fourth session, through the Commission for Social Development at its forty-seventh session, requested the Secretary-General, among other things, to intensify efforts to further develop and propose a set of possible indicators linked to the World Programme of Action for Youth and the proposed

goals and targets, in order to assist States in assessing the situation of youth, with a view to allowing it to be considered by the Commission for Social Development and by the Statistical Commission at the earliest opportunity.

B. Actions proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

17. During the forty-first session of the Statistical Commission, the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs will organize a side event to brief delegates on the process of developing a set of possible indicators and to initiate a debate on how the Statistical Commission could be most effectively involved.

VII. Realizing the Millennium Development Goals for persons with disabilities

A. Action requested by the General Assembly

18. In its resolution 64/131, the General Assembly, recalling the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which recognize persons with disabilities as both development agents and beneficiaries in all aspects of development and its previous resolutions on internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals, and concerned that the lack of data and information on disability and the situation of persons with disabilities at the national level contributes to the invisibility of persons with disabilities in official statistics, presenting an obstacle to achieving development planning and implementation that is inclusive of persons with disabilities, (a) requested the Secretary-General to disseminate widely and promote the use of the Guidelines and Principles for the Development of Disability Statistics and the Principles and Recommendations for Population and Housing Censuses and to facilitate technical assistance, within existing resources, including the provision of assistance for capacity-building of Member States, in particular to developing countries; and (b) encouraged Member States to make use of statistics, to the extent possible, to integrate a disability perspective in reviewing their progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals for all. It also requested the Secretary-General to submit information on the implementation of that resolution during the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly within the report requested by the Assembly in paragraph 13 (b) of its resolution 63/150.

B. Actions proposed by the Statistical Commission and the United Nations Statistics Division

19. At its forty-first session, the Commission will consider a note by the Secretary-General on the report of the Washington Group on Disability Statistics (E/CN.3/2010/20).